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Traces of equality policy and diversity management in Finnish work organizations
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TRACES OF EQUALITY POLICY AND DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN FINNISH WORK ORGANIZATIONS

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to discuss how equality and diversity are experienced in everyday work within Finnish work organizations and how equality policy and diversity management participate in maintaining the inequality regimes of the organizations.

Design/methodology/approach – The empirical findings are based on 31 interviews, which were collected in two private sector work organizations. Inequality regimes, the interlocked practices and processes that result in continuing inequalities in all work organizations, are used as an analytic tool.

Findings – There is an individualizing tendency of equality in Finnish work organizations, which is also the premise of diversity management. Accordingly, the organizations cannot address structural and historical discrimination based on gender, race, and class. Also, when diversity is intrinsic to the corporate image, the members of the organization downplay and legitimize inequalities in their organization.

Originality/value – The paper analyzes inequality regimes in a context that should be ideal for equality and diversity: Finland, where gender equality policies are relatively progressive, and organizations that strive for equality and diversity. This gives new insight on why inequalities are difficult to change.

Keywords: Equality, diversity, equality policy, diversity management, inequality regimes

Paper type: Research paper

Finland has practiced an active equality policy for decades. Until recently, Finnish equality policy has focused on gender equality, especially in the working life. However, after the so-called "turn to diversity" in 2000 (Siim, 2013, 624) previous gender-only policy regimes have been extended

throughout EU countries, including Finland. Since this turn, diversity has gained a foothold (although not a very firm one) in Finnish equality policy as well as in Finnish work organizations (Author, 2012; Borchorst et al., 2012).

Prior to the turn, diversity caught the attention of business management literature in the form of "diversity management". The concept of diversity management originates in the US and has been widely adopted in the industrialized countries of the West (e.g. Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). The idea of diversity management is that a culturally diverse workplace where differences are valued enables people to work to their full potential in a more creative and productive work environment (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Wrench, 2005).

Diversity management differs from equality policy in various ways. In diversity management, diversity is presented as a positive and voluntary effort on the part of the organization, compared to the negative one of simply avoiding the transgressions of anti-discrimination laws. Diversity management is not directed towards the interests of excluded or under-represented minorities. Instead, it is seen as an inclusive policy which encompasses the interests of all employees, including white males. (Kersten 2000, 242; Wrench, 2005, 73-74.) The most fundamental difference seems to be that equality policy is concerned with social justice while the primary emphasis of diversity management is on business benefits.

This paper is concerned with how equality and diversity are experienced in everyday work within Finnish work organizations and how equality policy and diversity management participate in maintaining the inequality regimes of the organizations. These questions will be answered by analyzing 31 interviews, which were collected in two private sector work organizations. Inequality regimes by Joan Acker (2006; 2009; 2011) are used as an analytic tool. All organizations have inequality regimes, that is, culturally mediated patterns of inequality, maintained by particular policies, rules, conventional practices of organizing work and ways in which people interact with

each other during their everyday work duties (Acker, 2011, 70). In line with Acker, this paper focuses on gender, race, class, and their intersections.

Equality policy and diversity management

Although Finland takes pride in being one of the most gender-equal countries in the world (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2013), its gender equality policy has been rather more reactive than proactive and international pressure has been pivotal to Finnish equality policy and legislation (Borchorst et al., 2012). The Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986) was enacted in 1987, as a result of the ratification of the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women). No grounds other than gender had explicit legal protection before the EU directives were transposed after 2000. Since then, Finland and other EU states have increasingly attempted to engage at conceptual and policy level with the fact that gender discrimination and inequality are shaped in fundamental ways by different inequality axes: by race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, and others (Krizsan et al., 2012, 2-4). In Finland, the Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014) was enacted in 2004. It outlaws discrimination on the basis of age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, health, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

Finland and other Nordic welfare states have been labelled 'women friendly' because high level of women participate in the labour market, education and politics. The system of public childcare and parental leave, as well as relatively progressive gender equality legislation are some of the most important "women friendly" policies and practices. (Borchorst & Siim 2008.) However, Birte Siim (2013, 621-622) claims that immigration represents a blind spot in the Nordic welfare strategy, which has questioned the Nordic welfare model's ability to conform to increasing diversities among women. Siim and Skjeie (2008) call the inclusion of the native majority women in the labour market, politics and society and the marginalization of women from diverse ethnic minorities on the

labour market, politics and society the "Nordic gender equality paradox". The Nordic welfare states seem to be friendly mainly to white working heterosexual mothers (Kantola 2007, 53).

Equality policy in Finland is mainly targeted at working life, which has forced work organizations to reflect on equality and diversity issues. However, the pressure to take equality and especially diversity into account has also sprung from globalization and immigration, which have made diversity more apparent than before. Managerial literature has reacted to this with the concept of diversity management. The definitions of diversity management (e.g. Kandola and Fullerton, 1998, 7) stress the necessity of recognizing cultural differences between groups of employees. These differences are harnessed to serve the organization's economic goals. (Ibid.)

There is an implicit instrumental and mechanistic rationale underpinning the definition of diversity management. Diversity is presented as a natural or obvious fact, and managing this fact promises to lead to more conducive work environments and higher productivity (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000, 19). Encouraging a culturally diverse workplace where differences are valued is supposed to enable people to work to their full potential in a more creative and productive work environment (Wrench, 2005, 74). There is little hard evidence to support these economic arguments (Wise and Tschirhart, 2000), which, however, has not reduced the corporate enthusiasm for diversity management (Kersten, 2000, 242).

Diversity management has also been criticized widely. It has been seen to perpetuate rather than combat inequalities in work organizations and to reproduce essentialist and stereotypical categories of difference (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000). It has also been accused of being too simplistic, as it emphasizes mechanistic practices such as training, communication, mentoring and teamwork, but falls silent about structural institutional inequality based on, for example, gender, race and class (Kersten, 2000, 243). Moreover, it has been blamed for replacing the moral argument of inequality by the business argument (Knights & Omanović, 2016; Wrench, 2005).

In Finnish work organizations, the idea of promoting diversity has not been as successful as in Anglo-American countries. The focus has been on the assumed similarity of Finns, and being different has even been considered as contemptible (Louvrier, 2013, 202). A study of Finnish corporate websites (Meriläinen et al., 2009) confirms this: diversity and its management appear are ignored on most websites, whereas there are several examples of gender equality. In this paper's data, diversity management as a concept is rarely mentioned, but the idea of diversity management is clearly present. Although the US-centric approach to diversity management may not hold well in Finnish context due to differences in socioeconomic conditions, national legislation, culture, demography, and history (see Syed& Özbilgin, 2009), the idea of managing diversity in order to increase organizations' performance has certainly made a breakthrough in Finnish work organizations as well.

Equality policy and diversity management influence the ways equality and diversity are experienced in organizations. Ideologically, they represent the extremes of equality and diversity: while equality policy aims for social justice, diversity management aims for more profitable business. In practice, these perspectives are not drastically different. In Finland, neoliberal public sector reform has changed the role of the state since the 1970s: the public sector has been downsized and the market principle has been brought into public governance (Yliaska, 2014). As a result, the public sector has become more market-oriented and business-oriented thinking has penetrated activities that have not traditionally emphasized profit-making. One such activity is the equality policy.

Gender equality is being presented as an export commodity, and equality policies appear to be closely connected to the interests of the labor market (Xxx & Author, 2015). Equality policy has to adapt to the institutionalized demands of technocratic governance; it uses the language of efficiency and the instruments of public bureaucracy. For example, implementation of equality policy focuses on the bureaucratic creation of evidence-based knowledge in policymaking and on instruments such as gender impact assessments that address gender issues within existing policy paradigms. This has

led to articulating a conception of gender equality that resonates with dominant policy frames that embrace not only neoliberal techniques of governance, but also marketized economic goals. (Author, 2016; Kantola & Squires, 2012) Thus, equality policy and diversity management can be seen to be getting ideologically closer to one another.

Earlier critical research on diversity management has stressed that equality policies should be central components of diversity management, not replaced by it (Noon 2007; Wrench 2005). In the U.S. and the U.K. this has been a central concern; however, in Finland the case is quite different. Diversity management practices are shaped by the history and legislation of the local context (Omanović 2009; Syed & Özbilgin 2009). In Finland, where gender equality is a strong social value, gender equality policy frames diversity management practices in the Finnish companies (Meriläinen et al. 2009). However, as equality policy is also being legitimized with business arguments, it cannot be the solution to the problems criticism has raised, namely the business case rationale for supporting equality and diversity.

Data and method: Studying gender, race, and class inequalities in organizations

All organizations are permeated by gender, race, and class. They are embedded in social structures and organizational practices; in hierarchical structures, jobs, divisions of labor, processes such as hiring and wage setting, in images of workers and managers, in interactions in the workplace, in work/family interconnections, and in individual constructions of identity. "Embeddedness" implies that processes of constructing organizations and jobs are shaped by gendered and racialized logic that is hidden behind neutral discourse. Organizational hierarchies and processes that recreate gender and race in organizations are also integral elements in class systems. (Acker, 2011, 67-70.) These practices and structures are in constant flux, and they tend to vary across organizations and societies (Tienari et al., 2002).

Gender, race, and class are bases for inequality in organizations. Other differences, such as sexuality, age, and physical inabilities, can also be bases for inequality, but in this paper, the focus is on gender, race, and class because they were the main categories of difference in the data. Here, in line with Acker (2011), gender refers to systems of social practices and beliefs that create and maintain numerous differences, and inequalities, between male and female categories. Race refers to social and cultural differences, rooted in economic and social practices, and ideologies. These differences are sometimes marked by physical differences, yet not always. Class refers to differential access to power and control over society's means of provisioning, which is fundamental to the organization of work and work hierarchies.

Inequalities are complex and cannot be understood by looking at bases of inequality as separate and distinct. Gender, race, and class, as well as other patterns of difference, all contribute to different lived realities. These sources or forms of inequality intersect: gender processes differ as class situations vary in different racial configurations in different historical contexts. (Acker, 2011, 66-68.)

In this paper the analysis of gender, race, and class inequalities is based on data which consists of 31 semi-structured research interviews, each lasting 1-1,5 hours. The author collected the data in two Finnish private sector work organizations during 2011-2012. The interviewees represent the organization as a whole: they work in different levels and functions in the organization. The interviewees were 24-49 years old; 16 of them were women and 15 men. Eight interviewees defined themselves as migrants, the rest as Finnish[1]. Migrants were overrepresented in the data; in both work organizations less than 10 per cent of the employees were migrants.

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[1] In the analysis the terms "Finnish" and "migrant" are used, because the interviewees used those words. These concepts are complex: who is "Finnish" or "migrant" depends on how these categories are defined. This paper will not focus on these definitions but rather on how differences are reproduced and used to maintain gender, race, and class inequalities in organizations.

The work organizations belong to the same international department store corporation. Their work cultures, including equality and diversity policies and practices, are very similar, which is why they will both be called "the department store", or "the DS", from now on. Both DSs are located in a big Finnish city, and each of them employs about 250 people. The purpose of the interviews was to find out if there were unequal practices and discrimination in the workplace according to the interviewees to discover the kinds of practices the workplace uses to support equal treatment and prevent discrimination.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcribed interviews were coded by assigning a thematic code to segments of the interview that described a particular theme within it. There were two kinds of codes: ones that stood for organizational practices (e.g. hiring, division of work, hierarchies) and ones that stood for bases for inequality (e.g. gender, race, and class). These codes were often overlapping; in those cases they were coded with both codes. This facilitated detecting how gender, race, and class were embedded in various organizational practices.

As an analytical frame, this paper uses inequality regimes by Joan Acker (2006; 2009; 2011). Inequality regimes are the interlocked practices and processes that result in continuing inequalities in all work organizations. The idea of inequality regimes is a conceptual strategy for not only understanding the mutual reproduction of gender, race, and class inequalities in organizations but also for assessing the possibilities of reducing inequalities.

Inequality regimes are linked to inequality in the surrounding society, its politics, history, and culture (Acker, 2006, 443). In this paper, the focus is on equality policy and diversity management in Finland in order to understand inequality regimes in this specific context. Acker has divided inequality regimes into six components, which will be employed in the analysis. They are: the bases of inequalities; organizational processes and practices that create and maintain, or challenge inequality; the visibility of inequalities; the legitimacy of inequalities; mechanisms of control and

compliance; and competing interests in changing or maintaining inequalities. The bases of inequalities in this analysis are gender, race, and class. This paper examines how experiences of inequality and diversity are linked to the components of inequality regimes and also how they are linked to gender equality policy and diversity management.

Equality and diversity in the Department Store

The corporation has strong values that all its stores live up to. The values emphasize, for example, democracy, social responsibility, and open-mindedness. The DS in Finland have done well in the Great Place to Work® ranking, and the interviewees found it to be a relaxed work environment where hierarchies were low and employees were treated fairly. Equality and diversity seemed to be important to the corporate image. However, at the time of the interview, the DS did not have a gender equality plan, although the Equality Act obligates the employers to do one. Therefore, it seemed that it was rather the corporate values than the equality policy that guided the DS.

Organizational processes and practices that create and maintain, or challenge inequality

Thinking outside the box is part of the business concept of the DS. This is one of the reasons diversity is valued: diverse people are supposed to bring diverse ideas to work. This was particularly apparent in certain organizational processes, namely recruitment and career advancement. The HR specialists and middle managers, who recruited people for the DS, talked very positively about the open-minded recruitment policy of the DS. The focus was on business-perspective.

We deliberately strive for recruiting diverse people, so that everyone would not be eighteen years old, but that there are older people to balance our structure. We have foreigners, we have a couple

of Swedes, a French, an Iraqi, a Jordanian, a Colombian. So it's not a reason not to hire someone if she/he[2] is from somewhere else. (HR specialist, woman, Finnish.)

We aim to recruit all kinds of people. It is based on our business idea that we aim to reach as many people as possible. And we have thought that since we want to get as diverse and different-aged customers as possible, we want our staff to reflect our clientele, too. […] We want to have employees from different cultures, because, okay, it's good from the customers' perspective, but it also helps us to advance. We get different perspectives and we can learn from each other when we don't fit the same mold. (HR specialist, woman, Finnish.)

The first quotation is a compound of equality policy and diversity management: diverse workforce is supposed to balance the structure of the organization, and it is in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination. The second quotation is in line with the principles of diversity management, although the concept is not brought up.

Both interviewees talk about diversity in a positive manner: it attracts diverse customers, and it helps the company to advance. This is an inclusive definition of diversity: any and all differences are considered as part of the diversity project (Kersten, 2000, 242). People with different gender, cultural background or class do not necessarily have different perspectives about work, and even if they did, their opportunities to make good use of them at work vary. Also, by considering all people "equally unique" the DSs' diversity policy also avoids and minimizes structural and institutional issues of gender, race, and class discrimination. Being "unique" as a white, heterosexual, middle-class man is quite different from being unique as a black, lesbian, working-class woman. By focusing on individuals rather than on groups of people, like women or people from different ethnic and class backgrounds, structural and institutional issues of gender, race, and class are silenced.

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[2] In the Finnish language pronoun 'hän' refers to she and he.

There is also a risk that equality and diversity only live in the organizational values, but not in the organizational practices. A Finnish HR specialist was asked what has the DS done to promote equality and she replied:

I feel like this whole question about equality is not somehow essential here. It's self-evident; it's not something that we have paid that much attention to. Instead, it automatically rises from the people that are selected here and our values. I can't even think of anything concrete we have done for equality because it has not been a problem in any way.

The Nordic countries have consistently been ranked as the highest in the world regarding gender equality. Paradoxically, this relatively good state of affairs may be a hindrance to improving conditions. In Finland, there is a strong belief that equality has already been achieved, and it can be difficult to motivate people to promote it further (Author, 2012; Xxx & Author, 2015). Even though the Equality Act obligates employers to promote gender equality systematically, this is not done in the DS because equality is taken for granted. Furthermore, the diversity policy of the DS prioritizes "soft" rather than "hard" equal opportunity practices —recognition of the cultural differences instead of setting of targets and the use of positive action (see Wrench, 2005, 75). This runs a risk that assumptions and actions that are rooted in the legitimation of systems of organizational power will not be altered (Acker, 2006, 457).

The visibility of inequalities

Inequalities at work tend to be invisible. One reason for this is that inequalities very often take place in the informal practices of the organization, in implicit settings of day-to-day interaction (Koivunen et al., 2015). Acker (2006, 452) also remarks that visibility of inequalities varies with the position of the beholder: "One privilege of the privileged is not to see their privilege." Men tend not to see their gender privilege, whites their race privilege and ruling classes their class privilege. However, in the DS, inequalities seemed to be invisible to everyone. Diversity was so intrinsic to

the corporate image that the employees found it difficult to believe that inequality could still take place:

There is zero discrimination going on here. They stress it out that this is part of our concept. We are an international company that has stores all around the world, we cannot tolerate such behavior. [...] *It's really a company that support lots of global issues, like racial and ethnic equality, and we take part in huge projects for charity all around the world.* […]*We feel really good as employees, we know that we are working for something that does good in the society.* (Worker, woman, migrant.)

A few minutes later the interviewee said that men seem to have better career opportunities in the DS than women. She wanted a different job in the DS but was not allowed to change, while her male colleague was. She toyed with the idea of inequality, but ended up rejecting it:

He's new, he just came in now, and he's not doing anything connected to this work. So I was feeling a bit disappointed, I am working with money, why can't I get [the job]*? I didn't understand and the first thing* [came to mind was] *that he's a man, oh well, maybe that's why. But I don't know really what the reason is and it cannot be so simple that he's a man. And I'm sure that's not the reason.*

When the formal image of the organization is built on equality and diversity, it can make informal practices of inequality invisible. The organization members who experience inequality think they must be mistaken because inequality would be against the values and business idea of the organization. If the members of the organization questioned that the organization lived up to its values, they would also have to accept that they might not be "working for something that does good in the society". This poses an ideological dilemma: the organization members are torn between constructing their workplace as an equal environment in spite of their own experiences about inequality (Kelan, 2009).

The legitimacy of inequalities

Inequalities are also very often legitimized. According to Acker (2011, 74), class inequality is highly legitimate in organizations because class practices are basic to organizing work in capitalist economies. Gender and race inequality are less legitimate, but they are often legitimated through arguments that naturalize the inequality (Koivunen et al., 2015). For example, the advantaged may think their advantage is richly deserved: they have won the market competition because of their natural superiority (Acker, 2006, 453-454). This shows even visible inequalities to be legitimized.

In the DS, it was apparent that the migrants mainly had the lowest positions in the organizations. This racial inequality was legitimized with individual competencies, namely language skills. Language skills also seemed to overrule any other skills the person had. One of the interviewees was a migrant woman who worked as a cashier although she had a university degree in English philology. She told her supervisor she wanted another job in the DS, in which she felt she could use her skills more, but was not allowed to change roles:

She [the supervisor] *said that before this job I would need to know more Finnish. But do you understand, it's connected only with my skills, it's nothing personal. I wouldn't say it's discrimination that stops me to progress.*

The interviewee served customers in Finnish. Yet, her Finnish was not good enough for another job. This is a common practice in Finnish working life: language requirements are often so vague that they can be used to reject all migrant applicants (Forsander, 2002, 167). The language criterion seemed to be quite flexible in the DS because there were at least two migrant men (from Western Europe) in managerial positions, who basically spoke no Finnish at all. This was not a problem because English was the official language in the company. Yet, the migrant cashier (from Eastern Europe) with a university degree in English philology was only told that her Finnish was not good enough.

In this example, gender and race inequalities are intertwined in a complex manner with organizational hierarchies. There are double standards for career advancement: migrant, Eastern-European woman has different language criterion than migrant, Western-European men. Climbing the career ladder is almost impossible for a migrant woman because she is marginalized for the sake of her gender and race. However, these inequalities are legitimized by giving priority to individual competencies. This nurtures a sense of individualism in organizations (Meriläinen et al., 2009, 233) and, again, makes structural inequalities invisible. When the individual is seen as an economic actor responsible for her own economic success, inequality is being legitimized as the outcome of individual, free choice (Acker, 2009, 211). People are constructed and construct themselves as active agents who can avoid confronting discrimination through making themselves responsible for overcoming it (Kelan, 2009, 204).

Finnish interviewees also used language skills as an excuse for inequalities in their workplace but from a different perspective. As Finland is one of the most gender-equal countries in the world, Finns tend to be blind to gender inequality in their own country, and especially in their workplace (Author, 2012; Korvajärvi, 2011). Salla Tuori (2007) has analyzed equality as a nation-building discourse in Finland: gender equality is seen as inherent to the nation while multiculturalism is seen as a challenge posed from outside. Thus, it can be difficult for some Finns to acknowledge inequality in their own workplace, especially if inequality falls upon migrants:

This is a harsh thing to say, but these people who come from abroad, they have zero chance to do anything else, and they don't have to be paid so much basically. But then again, they wouldn't probably get a job anywhere else, and [the DS] *offers them a job.* (Worker, man, Finnish)

The interviewer asks if the treatment is equal (compared to Finnish workers) and the interviewee replies:

Umm… I think it is because you don't have language skills to do something else. If you had, you could advance for sure. You couldn't do any other jobs, like talk with the customers, and you can't jump into management at once, where you can't discuss with anyone.

Here, inequality in the DS is legitimized with stereotypical assumptions about migrants and their poor language qualifications. Customer service is mentioned as a job that migrants cannot do, even though there are quite a few migrant cashiers in the DS. Inequality in Finnish society is naturalized, or equality for migrants is somehow different than equality for Finns, which also legitimizes inequality. As equality is seen as a feature of the Finnish nation and culture, the reasons for visible inequalities are sought from individual migrants and their working life competencies, and from language skills in particular.

Mechanisms of control and compliance

Although gender, race, and class inequalities tend to be invisible, people do not comply with unequal practices in their working lives only because they are not aware of them. As Acker (2011, 75) points out, compliance is also a survival strategy in the capitalist society, where money is necessary for survival and wages are the primary means of earning money. The fear of job loss is a powerful incentive to comply. This is class control, exerted by management and internalized by employees. Work opportunities and wages are affected by race and gender, which makes class control gendered and racialized by nature. (Ibid.)

In Finland, migrants, especially women, are in a vulnerable position in their working lives: they have difficulties in finding a job and proceeding with their career. Migrants are also often expected to work for a lower wage and lesser working conditions than Finns. (Ahmad, 2005; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2002.) This makes them particularly apt to being controlled by the fear of losing their jobs. The Finns and the migrants in the DS were well aware of this. In the interviews, it recurred that the migrants were very lucky to get a job in the DS, and they had the company's open-minded

recruitment policy to thank for this. Indeed, they were grateful, even if they had a university degree in their home country but, in their own words, "a simple job" in the DS:

I'm really pleased and glad that they took me to work here. It has been really hard for me to get a job. I have been living here for quite a long time and still it's really difficult. And sometimes the difficulty comes when I apply, I want to do some simple job, you know, to be able pay my bills, to live as a normal person. But they say you are too educated. So either you can't get the job that you have the education for, or you can't get a simple job either. […] *So I'm really glad that here it didn't go this way, they just decided we don't care you're a foreigner.* (Worker, woman, migrant.)

The quotations represent a combination of direct, indirect and internalized control. Wages are a form of direct control. Recruitment of migrants who have fewer employment opportunities and thus will accept lower level jobs and possibly lower wages is indirect control (Acker, 2009, 212). Racism and xenophobia are naturalized, and the migrants just have to "deal with it", as another migrant employee puts it. This is a form of internalized control, as well as the belief that there is no point in challenging the fundamental gender, race and class nature of things. All types of control ensure that employees act to further the organization's goals and accept the system of inequality (Acker, 2006, 454). For the organization, migrants can, therefore, be "ideal workers" (Acker, 2006): they are compliant and will accept low wages because of their vulnerable position in the Finnish labor market.

Competing interests in changing or maintaining inequalities

Even though there were informal, invisible and legitimized inequalities in the DS, the organization strove for equality and diversity, largely due to the belief that equality and diversity are good for business. One of the managers of the DS made a distinction between equality as a value in itself and equality as good business:

I think it is perhaps a bit naïve to think that I do this [take care of wellbeing at work] *because I like you so much. What that has to do with business? In a workplace, you don't have to like another person one bit, but you get along with them and you want them to feel good, because you want to get better profit. I don't see anything exclusionary in that.* (Woman, middle management, Finnish.)

One of the main criticisms towards diversity management stresses that it replaces the moral with the business argument and thus removes the moral imperative from action for equal opportunities. The problem is that fighting racism and gender and class inequality will only be seen as important if there is a recognizable business reason for it (Wrench, 2005, 77-78). The goals of the organizations in terms of profit-making might conflict with the goals of equality policy. For example, reducing costs involves reducing wages, not raising them, as pay equity would require (Acker, 2006, 456). This is why a business argument for equality and diversity is not enough: equality and diversity should also be promoted when they are not good for business.

Conclusion: Are diversity management and equality policy enemies or allies?

The aim of this paper has been to explore how equality and diversity are experienced in everyday work within Finnish work organizations equality and how equality policy and diversity management participate in maintaining the inequality regimes of the organizations. Patrizia Zanoni et al. (2010) have identified promising directions for critical diversity research. In line with them, further aim of this paper has been to participate in discussion about diversity in organizational settings, as well as to shed light on how diversity is made sense of and experienced by a diverse workforce itself. Searching for new, emancipating forms of organizing has, however, been left to other researchers and/or research papers.

The answer to the research questions is threefold. Firstly, there is an individualizing tendency of equality and diversity in work organizations. In work organizations, equality is seen as a matter of one's skills and choices rather than as a system of gendered and racialized power relations

intertwined with all spheres of life. This is also the premise of diversity management. This tendency disassociates diversity management from the equality policy, which aims to transform the structures that give rise to inequality, not the people.

Secondly, the structural and institutional issues of gender, race, and class discrimination are silenced in work organizations. Even when the organization members had personal experiences of inequality, they refused to believe that an organization that celebrates equality and diversity could reproduce inequalities. Gender, race, and class inequalities are embedded in the structures and practices of societies and organizations. Therefore, they tend to be invisible, and they become even more invisible when they are hidden beneath the corporate image that endorses equality and diversity. Thus, equality and diversity as business strategies can actually make inequalities invisible, as the analysis has demonstrated.

Thirdly, equality and diversity are seen as an abstract value: something the organization can endorse, but not something that needs to be actively promoted with, for example, equality plans and affirmative action. Accordingly, diversity management is weak as an anti-discrimination measure: it lacks the components of addressing structural and historical discrimination based on gender, race, and class. As John Wrench (2005, 82) asks, 'What is the point of celebrating a diverse organizational culture when the long-term effects of historical exclusion mean that underrepresented minorities are not in a position to take advantage of opportunities to join, or progress within, the organization?'

This paper confirms Acker's (2006, 443) notion: all organizations have inequality regimes; even those that strive for equality (see also Healy et al., 2011). One of the aims of this paper has been to take Acker's theory a bit further by adding a policy level to it and by demonstrating how inequality regimes are maintained by particular policies, that is, equality policy and diversity management. Inequality regimes are difficult to challenge, as Acker has already pointed out, and one of the

reasons is that strategies to promote equality are intimately interconnected to the same organizational processes and practices that reproduce inequality regimes. Diversity management participates in maintaining inequality regimes by individualizing equality and diversity, by making structural inequalities invisible, by perceiving equality and diversity as abstract values and, above all, by legitimizing equality and diversity in terms of business.

Earlier research has suggested that equality policies should be central components of diversity management, not replaced by it. This research has pointed out that even if there is a connection between them on the organizational level, it is not the solution to the problems criticism has raised. Inequalities are embedded in the organizing processes of work, which makes them difficult to challenge. Diversity management is not very effective in changing work organizing processes, but neither is equality policy. There are several reasons for this, such as soft equality legislation (Kantola, 2010); project-based organization of equality work (Brunila, 2009); and lack of motivation on the organizational level (Author, 2012; Xxx & Author, 2015). As a result, on the organizational level equality policy often shrinks into something cosmetic even in a context which is relatively positive and progressive in terms of equality and diversity.

Equality policy and diversity management both have a role in creating, maintaining, and changing inequalities in work organizations. This paper does not attempt to represent either diversity management or equality policy as good or bad, but rather as something that should be under constant negotiation. Diversity management is not likely to vanish. On the contrary, it is likely to continue to be more seductive to the companies than equality policy, including Equality Act, which is treated as a recommendation rather than as a mandatory law in Finnish work organizations (see Nousiainen et al., 2013). Therefore promoting equality and diversity in work organizations is not an either-or choice; the question is how diversity management and equality policy can bring about change.

In the end, inequalities are created and maintained in certain organizational context, by members of the organization who interpret equality and diversity in different ways, have different experiences about being privileged and/or disadvantaged, and have different relationships toward their organization and its goals. The asset of equality policy is that it aims to make systemic oppression visible, whereas the asset of diversity management is that it takes the organizational context into account. Both perspectives are vital in changing inequality regimes, although critical discussion about equality policy and diversity management is much needed. This paper suggests that equality policy and diversity management should not be seen as separate and contradictory, especially in the Nordic context, where equality policy regulates working life and work organizations in many ways. However, in order to change inequality regimes with equality policy and diversity management equality and diversity should be treated as more than instruments to enhance national or organizational competitiveness; they should be treated as values in their own right.

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